

# HUMAN SERVICES

**Chair:** Paula Prentice, Summit County Council Member

**Vice Chair:** Shane Wilkin, Highland County Commissioner

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State and local governments work together to provide programs that help citizens achieve and maintain employment, protect children and older adults and, when necessary, connect families to food, clothing and shelter.

While most of these programs are designed to provide services to those in crisis, counties focus on a work-first approach that addresses the root cause of the crisis and prevents the need for services in the future. To this end, county departments of job and family services, public children services agencies and child support agencies have begun to redesign service delivery and collaborate and share services in unique and innovative ways in order to meet the complex needs of their clients.

Ohio's 88 counties experience vast differences in their economies, demographics and populations. Because of this diversity, CCAO urges the Governor and General Assembly to maintain county funding levels and flexibility between funding streams to the extent possible under federal law, so that each county can prioritize services based on the local need and demand for those services.

CCAO supports the following human services initiatives:

- Increasing state investments in child protection, adult protective services and family and children first councils.
- Sustaining state support for the implementation of Ohio Benefits.
- Modernizing child support processes and forms.
- Allowing commissioners to appoint members of the Veteran Service Commissions (VSC) and giving them the ability to review and revise VSC budgets.

- Retaining commissioners as the authority for property tax levies that fund health districts and granting them discretion on the type, millage and duration of the levy.

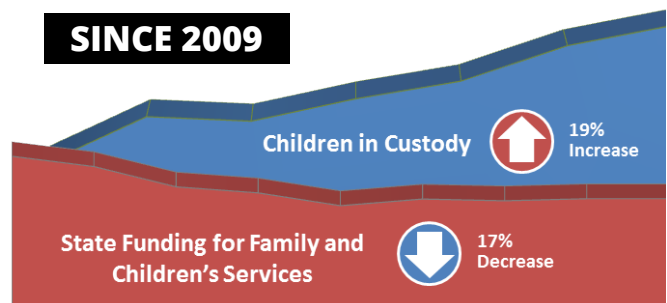
## COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

### GROWING CONCERNS FOR CHILD PROTECTION

One of the most difficult tasks facing counties is the administration of programs and services for children who are abused or neglected. Recently, Ohio has seen an increase in opiate use that has reached epidemic proportions, spanning communities of every size and demographic. The fallout from this epidemic has caused significant challenges for the child protective system.

Parental addiction has caused an increase in the number of children in custody and the reunification process takes much longer. Placement costs for these families are steadily eating away at children services resources and county budgets are becoming overwhelmed by this new need. Even counties who have successfully passed levies to cover these important services are struggling to provide the resources required.

When reunification is possible, many of these children need additional services to deal with the residual effects that come from living with addicted parents, including depression, anxiety, PTSD and behavioral and learning difficulties.



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Furthermore, opiate cases tend to be extremely traumatic for everyone involved, including child protective caseworkers. The system is now facing a workforce shortage due to higher than normal turnover, placing even more pressure on this delicate system.

Public children services agencies can safely reduce the number of children entering foster care by implementing alternative response, which allows them to partner with families to wrap services around them before a placement is needed, supporting relatives and other kin to prevent children from being placed with unrelated foster or congregate care and aggressively seeking permanent adoptive homes when children cannot be reunified with their birth family. Unfortunately, many counties have had to reduce or eliminate these best practices due to exorbitantly high placement costs – meaning higher expenditures and poorer outcomes in the long run.

CCAO strongly encourages an increased state investment in child protection to enlist and retain quality case workers and recruit foster parents for the increasing number of children who need placements, as well as support best practices and in-home services.

**NATIONALLY, OHIO IS 1ST FOR LOCAL CHILD PROTECTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS. MEANWHILE, THE STATE RANKS 50TH FOR PER CAPITA INVESTMENT COMPARED TO OTHER STATES.**

### **HUMAN SERVICES TECHNOLOGY, MODERNIZATION AND EFFICIENCY INITIATIVES**

CCAO appreciates the efforts and leadership of the Governor, the Office of Health Transformation and the Departments of Job and Family Services (JFS) and Medicaid for their efforts to create a streamlined and efficient eligibility determination system for Ohio's public assistance programs. The Ohio Integrated Eligibility System, referred to as Ohio Benefits, will eventually streamline much of the eligibility work being done by county JFS departments today. CCAO continues to

support modernization and efficiency initiatives that provide counties with the tools (developed with county insight) to administer programs as effectively as possible.

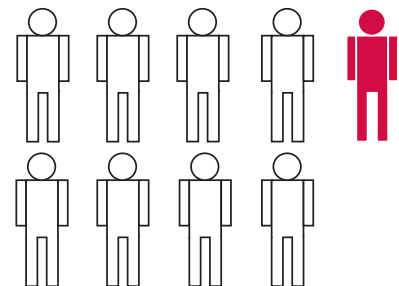
Currently, Ohio provides support to help counties with the implementation of this new system which includes an enhanced Medicaid match rate as well as an additional state GRF investment of \$7.2 million per year for Medicaid related income maintenance costs in the SFY 2016-2017 biennium. CCAO would like to thank the Ohio Department of Medicaid for authorizing an additional \$5 million in administrative dollars on top of the current \$7.2 million per year for SFY 2017 to assist with the challenges of implementation.

Because the creation of this new system has proven taxing to already-stretched county workers, the Governor and General Assembly should continue to appropriately support counties for the ongoing implementation of the Ohio Integrated Eligibility System ("Ohio Benefits") as well as increased demand on county departments per the Affordable Care Act.

### **ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

Counties are charged with providing a uniform adult protective services program for older adults who require protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation. Counties are the logical delivery mechanism for adult protective services due to the close proximity necessary to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect and the legal relationships with prosecutors, sheriffs and courts to enforce protective services. Elder abuse requiring adult protective services interventions can range from physical abuse, emotional or verbal abuse, self-neglect or financial exploitation.

**CURRENTLY  
1 IN 9  
SENIORS  
REPORT  
BEING  
ABUSED.**



BY 2030, OHIO'S SENIOR  
POPULATION WILL  
INCREASE **CLOSE TO**

**50%**

As a result of Am Sub House Bill 483 (130th General Assembly), \$10 million dollars was infused into Ohio's adult protective services (APS) system. Additionally, a workgroup was created in statute to review programmatic and funding gaps in the APS system and make recommendations on how to better improve the system.

Further reforms have been addressed in House Bill 64 and House Bill 24 (131st General Assembly) but very little funding has been identified. A \$3.5 million per year appropriation was made in House Bill 64 to fund APS, allotting \$30,000 to each county; however this will not provide even one full-time case worker in many counties. In order to ensure victims of elder abuse receive core adult protective services, the state must financially support the administration and delivery of such services.

## **CHILD SUPPORT**

**A FAMILY WITH AN ESTABLISHED CHILD SUPPORT ORDER WILL GO OFF OF CASH ASSISTANCE THREE TIMES FASTER THAN ONE WITHOUT.**

Ohio's child support system impacts one in every three children in the state. As county child support agencies increase paternity establishments and overall collections, children attain a higher standard of living. The child support program has utilized current funding, technology and tools to a great extent over the past 15+ years and is now transitioning to incorporate newer models aimed at assisting lower income families.

Several strategies are being piloted across the State. They include early intervention programs;

collaboration with both workforce agencies and social service agencies to assist with barriers that obligor parents may have to obtaining and maintaining employment; parenting time engagement; strategies to improve parenting and co-parenting skills; and person-centered case management. In order to incorporate more of these strategies across the state for more families, the program needs additional support from the State and an upgrade in technology.

CCAO supports the streamlining of administration of county processes that address the modernization of child support forms and the enhancement of technology for better customer access, as well as implementation of the Child Support Guidelines Advisory Council recommendations.

## **CHANGES TO THE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION LAW**

CCAO supports initiatives to review the law and operation of Veteran Service Commissions to be sure enhanced and coordinated services are available to our brave men and women of the armed services returning home. The mandate contained in ORC Section 5901.11 to fund the Veterans Service Commission at a level of up to five-tenths of a mil per dollar on the assessed value of the property of the county should be studied by the Department of Veteran Services in an effort to identify alternative funding options to replace current county funding. We support the enhanced ability for the boards of county commissioners to review and revise the budget of the Veterans Service Commission, especially as it pertains to the administrative and operational expenses of the Commission.

As it relates to operational expenses, there is a special need to be sure that the Veterans Service Commission does not have the authority to provide for staff compensation increases that exceed the average increase provided to other appointing authorities through the appropriation process. Additional checks and balances are needed to ensure that needy veterans are receiving essential financial assistance and other services in a cost efficient and responsible manner that fully utilizes other health, human service

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and employment programs. The Department of Veteran Services should provide funding for any training that is mandated by the department. Finally, boards of county commissioners should become the appointing authority for members of Veteran Service Commissions. If this authority is not granted, commissioners should be given the ability to appoint two of the five members.

facilitate a public forum in which health officials may discuss their levy request and the reasons why it is warranted.

### **FAMILY & CHILDREN FIRST COUNCILS**

Counties have worked diligently to piece together a seamless delivery system for families seeking assistance for their children out of a patchwork of state and federal programs that tend to leave gaps, create overlaps in services and often contain conflicting regulations. Local Family and Children First Councils work to reduce duplication of services and to help families navigate health, social and human services. In order to perform these coordinating functions, each county, regardless of size, was traditionally allocated \$20,000 to administer Family and Children First Councils. This amount was reduced to \$16,257 in FY 10, \$17,069 in FY 11 and was even further reduced to \$15,750 each year in the FY 12/13 biennium and remained at the lesser amount in the FY 14/15 and current biennium. CCAO recommends appropriately funding the administration of local Family and Children First Councils by increasing the allocation to \$30,000 per county.

### **LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS**

CCAO supports giving boards of county commissioners and county councils discretion regarding the submission, type of property tax levy (renewal, increase, reduction or replacement), millage and duration of property tax levies submitted to the voters for the purpose of funding a health district. If legislative action allows for a joint health district to be formed that covers multiple counties, commissioners should also have discretion over multi-county levies.

Should this discretion not be granted to boards of county commissioners, it is important commissioners should remain the levy authority, in order in part to maintain accountability of the entities requesting additional tax dollars and to